4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

593 she gives it to me." In describing his relationship with his maternal grand-
152 parents, with whom he spent all but two of the first twelve years of his life,
159 this same person says:
593
431
603

> My younger sister and I were born one year after the other. So mother gave me to grandmother to be weaned. I lived with her until I became a novice at the monastery at the age of twelve. I lived with grandmother, so I loved grandmother and grandfather more. I loved grandmother even more than my own mother and father. Wherever grandfather and grandmother went, I went too. Grandmother loved me: she always gave me sweets and toys. I had everything I wanted because I was the only young thing in the house. She loved me. She was going to give her property to me, land and gold, as much as she was going to give to her own children. But it was only a promise. I got the gold, but not the land, because when grandmother died, grandfather got a new wife. She was young. . . . I didn't quite like her. The young woman was too economical. . . . Sometimes she prevented grandfather from buying good things for me. When grandfather was going to buy gold or anything for me, she stopped him. She wanted him to buy for her more than for his grandchild.

593 This excerpt, taken from the biography of one of the life history informants and comprising almost the complete portrayal of the relationship between the informant and the individuals with whom he spent the crucial years of his childhood, is by no means atypical. The point is that of all the myriad
(431) elements in the relationship, or of all the loving characteristics that in his
(603) eyes the grandparents had, he chose to emphasize only the material gifts they had given him as the measure of their love. Other informants are no different: one man said he knew his father did not love him because when he died he left the family home to the Buddhist monastery; and a woman said she admired her father because "when he died there was property left. He was a good man: he did not abandon his children. He was worried about them." (Her other reason for *admiring* him was that "he was the person who brought me into the world.")

596 The other major form of familial love is evidenced in the camaraderie,
593 warmth, and generosity that surrounds the family in planning and ac-
243 complishing the various tasks associated with rice farming. As indicated earlier, the cultivation and harvesting of rice is not only an economic operation in Bang Chan, but almost a way of life. When villagers must deal with the very real and complex problems of planting and bringing in the harvest, all the individualistic propensities, and even to an extent the authority patterns, with which they normally indulge themselves recede before the cooperative requirements of the task at hand. In a very real sense the functional requirements of the economic activity, particularly during

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

essence, much of the villagers' interaction is based on certain formal, rather than substantive, considerations,[14] the net effect of which is to minimize the impact that they might have upon each other but to maximize each person's sense of psychic independence and integrity.

Our phrasing here is principally in analytic not evaluative terms. However, it should be clear that from an evaluative point of view, there are both "positive" and "negative" consequences to the continuing use of this interactive mode. On the positive side, the villagers' politeness contributes to their extraordinary tolerance for nonconformity, personal deviance, failure, or the inability of individuals to live up to standards. In effect, the villagers seem to be saying that if another person is poor, weak, stupid, or naïve, that is essentially his own business (or problem), not cause for ridicule or even amelioration. People are publicly accepted and respected for what they are, despite their shortcomings. The sense of psychological security that such treatment affords is clear: it means that no matter what an individual's status or personal qualities may be, he can generally expect to be treated well by others. The canons of courtesy require this. On the other hand, to have to be continually sensitive to one's effect on others is, from ego's point of view, not without its psychic costs. Thus, although politeness is aimed at keeping social relationships smooth and uncomplicated, it frequently results in a lack of spontaneity and in the inhibition of genuine feelings. A cosmetic is supposed to enhance one's natural qualities, but inevitably it also conceals them.

To what extent this concealment "troubles" the villagers is most difficult to determine. There clearly are circumstances in which certain negative consequences follow directly from such concealment. But whether villagers are generally unhappy because they cannot express what they feel is problematic. Their admiration for individuals who "speak their feelings from their hearts" is occasionally unmitigated; but far more frequently, they speak of the "kindness" and "good hearts" of those who hide their feelings "so as not to hurt others." [15]

---

[14] All interaction is of course based on both formal and substantive considerations. The issue here is the relative emphasis given to one over the other, and how one may even be used as a substitute for the other when presenting the self.

[15] The case of Dang (Hanks and Phillips 1961) referred to earlier is an excellent example of the kinds of difficulty that may follow from the concealment of one's real sentiments. Dang's story is a somewhat plaintive tale: how, because of his anxiety about revealing his true feelings to his father, uncle, and aunt (his social superiors) he lost a house, some land, and married a girl he "did not quite want to." Yet at all times he maintained courteous relationships with all concerned. What is most significant about Dang's case, however, is the position of psychic isolation to which politeness brought him. Basically, Dang substituted in his relationships with his relatives the *forms* of politeness for the more enduring *substance* of love, loyalty, and obligation. Rather than trust to the strength of such sentiments to help resolve his

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

609 Of the various forms politeness takes, its most relaxed, least contrived
574 form in the cordiality that villagers extend to newcomers. Strangers to Bang Chan are hardly swept off their feet, but once contact has been established, they are welcomed with a degree of attention far exceeding simple tolerance of their presence. People express a curious interest in them as individuals, as if somehow their presence were adding a new dimension to the lives of their hosts. In the case of many Bang Chaners, this is probably true: the lives of these villagers are sufficiently routine and insular that the appearance of a new face is identified also with the advent of a significant and new experience. Still other villagers approach the newcomer with an attitude that says in effect: "One should try to meet and know as many persons as possible. Who knows what good may come of it?" The implied meaning here is that the cursory contact may in time develop into a firm relationship of reciprocal rights and obligations, whereby person A could turn to B to borrow money, ask his help in finding a job, help sponsor his son's ordination, and vice versa. There is in this attitude a sense of gentle optimism combined with opportunism. And still other villagers, probably the majority, approach the newcomer with no self reference at all, but with the simple intention of trying to make him feel comfortable. Whatever the intention in each case, however, the dominant behavior exhibited to the newcomer is openness, amiability, and curiosity.

576 The actual expressions of conviviality are at all times simple and
574 straightforward. They involve asking the person such questions as his age,
521 place of birth, whether he is married, or whether he has yet served in the
609 monkhood. (Notice the phrasing of this last question. The polite Thai form is never whether a person has been a monk or not, but rather whether he has already been a monk or not *yet* become one. The syntax of the interrogative form assumes the good intentions of the other person.) If the individual is identified as coming from a locale with special or distinguishing characteristics, the conversation will often involve humorous allusions to the place. For example, if he is from the North, there will most likely be joking references to the beautiful women of Chiengmai; if he is from the Northeast, to the funny accent of the people of that area. If the relative statuses of visitor and host can be quickly identified (based upon age, clothes, speech patterns, and occasionally surname), the conversation may turn to topics whose very purpose is to emphasize status considerations and thus make the participants more comfortable with one another. If they

156 difficulties (ask his father to save the family land for him; tell the aunt he did not
159 want to marry the girl she had chosen—which he could have done had he felt secure about his relatives' love for him), he politely said nothing. The net result of all of this, as indicated in the text, was a deep sense of personal inadequacy and resentment that loved ones cannot be depended on. Further, Dang had begun to treat others as he felt others had treated him.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

particularly that of the one who went to Burma, had considerable effect on me and on the continuity of the research, it appeared to affect the villagers not at all. In their less predictable world, such movement was quite customary. 114

Because three of the assistants were with me for substantial periods of time, a few words should be said about them as individuals and their role in the community.

My principal assistant was an individual whose own life history, although not unusual for Thailand, describes one of the most important and least known psychological types emerging in the newly developing countries of the world today. Born and reared in a Northeastern village, he came to Bangkok in his bare feet at the age of sixteen to fulfill a childhood dream of becoming a newspaperman. (He once said to me that "if the first *farang* who came to Thailand in the sixteenth century had wanted to study a village, they would have had to pick a village just like the one in which I was born.") After working on a road construction gang during the day and going to school at night, he accumulated enough money to support himself and to enter Thammasart University. While working as a newspaperman, he became ill, had to leave Bangkok, and took a job as a forest ranger in the North, which gave him considerable free time for writing. It was while he was in the North that I heard about him, and asked him to come down and work with me. While working in Bang Chan, he was able to reëstablish some of his old Bangkok ties so that after my departure, he and a wealthier associate established a publishing company, one purpose of which was to have an outlet for their own writings. He has since published a volume of short stories, and has undertaken with his colleague and others a field survey of Thai peasant oral literature. His ultimate aspiration at the time was to start the first newspaper in the Northeast, one addressed especially to the interests of Northeastern peasants. When we first met he had just turned twenty-five. 114 159

Despite his worldly experience, his primary reference remains that of a peasant, albeit a well-educated one. I have seen him discussing the beauty of a field of fresh growing rice with a group of Bang Chaners exactly as if he were one of them. Similarly, his spontaneous use of peasant idioms, fictive kin terms, and body gestures were indistinguishable from those of almost any Bang Chaner. He "knew" precisely when to take a villager by the hand or to place his own hand upon the villager's leg as a sign of affection. Even his wisecracks to the girls were perfectly delivered: cute enough to raise a titter but never broad enough to be considered offensive. Although some of these actions were prompted by his desire to get on good terms with the villagers, most of them were quite spontaneous. 114

None of this of course was lost on a people as socially perceptive as the

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

114 villagers of Bang Chan. Although in their eyes he probably never ceased being identified in some ways with the *farang*, he was defined primarily as "one of us." He helped reinforce this definition by referring to himself and the villagers as "we Thai" or "we Thai farmers," as contrasted with the *farang*. Often, not out of any enmity but simply because he had a ready foil, he would make fun of my *farang* ways for the benefit of the villagers. It was conduct like this, repeatedly expressed, that permitted him later to ask the villagers their opinions of the *farang* without raising any eyebrows. On the other hand, when the need arose, he readily assumed the role of the gentle, guiding, probing representative of the research who, in his efforts to get the villagers to participate, would appeal to everything from pride in country ("Don't you want the *farang* to know the true way we Thai people think") to the principle of reciprocity ("We do a favor for *Aacaan* Herb by helping him pass his examination, and he helps us by bringing us fame").

The two female graduate students who worked part-time were not as distinctive as their male counterpart, but in their own way, were equally as effective in the research. One was the daughter of a high-ranking Army Officer School teacher; the other was the daughter of a low-level bureaucrat. In their early twenties, they had been closest friends during college and graduate studies. To a certain extent, they were prototypes of the upper-middle-class, college educated Thai female.[2] Confident about their 114 562 577 professional abilities and aware of how much they are needed, they are caught in the conflict of whether to participate in "worldly affairs" and thus become independent and admired social leaders, or to become wives and mothers, and thus live in the shadows of their husbands. Their problem, unlike the case in the United States, is that both alternatives are equally valued and equally available and that because the social need is so great, they can actually become leaders with not too much effort. The conflict is further aggravated by the fact that they come from the social class that emphasizes a double sexual standard. At the same time as they are expected to be assertive and competent in their jobs, they are also expected to be sweet, docile, and compliant females. They resolve this conflict to a large

[159] [2] The daughter of the lower-level bureaucrat had this status by virtue of her own accomplishment, not her father's. In fact, one of the most touching scenes I ever observed in Thailand was when the girl's entire family assembled at Don Muang Airport to see her off to the United States where she had won a graduate fellowship. She had become the hope and pride of her family. Her mother, in the traditional cropped hair style of the Thai female and her mouth stained with betel juice, was trying to stand on the pair of oversized high heels that she had bought especially for the occasion. Tears were flowing down her eyes, both in pride over her daughter and because she could hardly walk on her first pair of "modern" shoes. My male assistant, in his inimitable way, turned to me and whispered: "Khun Maese [the honored mother] wants to be just like her successful daughter."